GRYAAAAH!!!

YOU'RE STILL THE BEST SWORDSMAN I'VE EVER SEEN, CARNELIAN.
AND YOU'VE LEARNED A THING OR TWO, LAPIS. NICE PARRY-TO-REVERSE. HOW'S PANTHER?

AHHHHHH!

WHEN I WOKE UP, IT WAS A COUPLE OF DAYS LATER AND LOTHESTIE WAS BANDAGING MY WOUNDS WE'VE BEEN TOGETHER EVER SINCE
I DON'T GET IT
OUR MASTER REQUIRES THE POWER OF 11 GUARDIANS AND THEIR ACCOMPANYING STONES TO FULFILL THE PROPHESY AND RETURN THIS WORLD TO THE AGE OF GOLD
WHAT ABOUT YOU, ALICE? HOW'S YOUR QUEST GOING?
OH WELL...
I'M STILL TRYING TO FIGURE IT ALL OUT, REALLY BUT I THOUGHT I'D LOST YOU AND ONE OF MY GUARDIAN STONES, FOREVER AND THEN HERE YOU ARE RIGHT IN MY PATH
FOR THE POWER OF THESE GUARDIANS AND THEIR STONES WE HAVE SCOURED THE TWELVE MINES OUR SEARCH IS NEARLY AT AN END

WITH THE ADDITION OF ONE MORE STONE, WE CAN SET IN MOTION THE FINAL EVENTS AND END THIS LONG JOURNEY.
THE FATE OF THIS WORLD HANGS IN THE BALANCE! FORTUNE, WHICH WAY WILL YOUR WHEEL SPIN?

WILL THERE BE A NEW BEGINNING...
...OR MERELY AN END?
FICKLE FATE, YOU CAN BE SO AMUSING...
끼아아아

HOW MUCH FURTHER IS THIS CURSED MINE?
TWO MORE DAYS, LORD.
BUT HIDDEN DANGERS LURK ON ISLE MINE'S SHORES.
?

THE HABIT, ESMERAUD, RULES HER MINE WITH AN IRON FIST SHE IS THE SUBJECT OF MANY MYSTERIOUS TALES
IF HALF OF WHAT I HEAR IS TRUE, THEN SHE'S A WITCH OF GREAT POWER THEY SAY SHE CAN SEE THE FUTURE AND SUMMON STRANGE BEASTS TO DO HER BIDDING
WHAT NEW NONSENSE ARE YOU HOOTING, BIRD-BRAIN?
LADY IVORY AN ELEGANT ENTRANCE AS ALWAYS
MY APOLOGIES I WAS JUST LEAVING

I DON'T LIKE DIAMOND'S PETS THEY'RE NOT PROPERLY TRAINED.
WELL? WHAT DO YOU WANT?
DIAMOND...
WHEN ARE WE GOING TO GET MARRIED?
DID YOU WANT TO COME JUST TO PESTER ME? THIS CAMPAIGN WON'T BE OUR HONEYMOON
I KNEW SHE'D JUST CAUSE TROU GO BACK TO YOU CRYSTAL PALACE, QUEEN! I'M INCH AWAY FROM RU THE ENTIRE WORL DON'T HAVE TIME YOUR HYSTERIC
WHY NOT? ARE YOU TRYING TO GET RID OF ME? IS THAT IT?
ARE YOU STILL FANTASIZING ABOUT THAT MUD-COLORED SPAR?
DON'T FORGET YOUR PROMISE DIAMOND.

I'VE KEPT MY PART OF THE BARGAIN. I LENT YOU MY POWER. BUT IF YOU KEEP TREATING ME LIKE THIS, I'LL TAKE IT BACK. AND IF YOU THINK OF CROSSING ME...
BOTH YOU AND YOUR JUJU WILL SUFFER FOR IT!
IF YOU EVEN THINK ABOUT TOUCHING HER
REMEMBER WHO MADE YOU! AND WHO CAN BREAK YOU!

YOU'LL REGRET THIS DO YOU HEAR ME? YOU'LL...
LAZULI.
FOR FOUR YEARS I'VE HUNTED YOU. WHAT A CLEVER FOX YOU ARE, TO CONFOUND ALL MY HOUNDS
WHERE ARE YOU, LAZULI? LET ME FIND YOU SOON...

I'M SHARY FROM VOLCANO MINE. NICE TO MEET YOU.
I'M T-T-TAIMAI. I'M F- F-FROM SUMER MINE.
I'M KIZETTE FROM GLACE MINE. WHAT'S GOING ON?

I AM LUTHIL. I MADE LAPIS' ACQUAINTANCE IN PLUIE MINE, AND I MUST SAY THE INTERVENING PERIOD HAS BEEN VERY NOVEL.
I'M MORIAN, FROM LAC MINE.
I'M ADURA. I MET LAPIS IN MARSH MINE. I'VE BEEN ALONG FOR THE RIDE EVER SINCE

HEY! YOU LOOK JUST LIKE DIAMOND!
What a cutie!!
THERE'S A GOOD REASON FOR THAT
SINCE HE'S MY HALF-BROTHER, AND ALL
I'M CUBIC. I'M ACTUALLY FROM NEIGE MINE, BUT I MET LAPIS IN CITE MINE.

SHARY, DO YOU WANT COME WITH ME TOMORROW AND CHECK ON THEM?
SURE
CARNELIAN, PROMISE ME ONE THING...
SILICA HAD TO STAY AT THE LAST VILLAGE TO TAKE CARE OF HER SICK CHILD.
DON'T ASK ME ABOUT CUB; I'LL EXPLAIN EVERYTHING WHEN THE TIM IS RIGHT
HOPEFULLY EVERYTHING'S OKAY WITH THEM
.....
YOU'VE CHANGED SO MUCH SINCE THE LAST TIME I SAW YOU, LAPIS.

WHAT...
I DON'T SEE ANY GRAY.
I SEE A MAN WHO'S GROWN INTO HIS DESTINY.
ANYWAYS, HOW'S YOUR WOUND?
WHEN WE MET, I WAS 15, JUST A KID, REALLY. I'VE SPENT THE LAST FOUR YEARS ON THE RUN FROM DIAMOND'S SPIES...
FINDING AND KEEPING MY BAND OF ALLIES TOGETHER. THAT AND KNOWING I'LL HAVE TO FACE HIM WILL GIVE YOU GREY HAIRS IN A HURRY
WHICH ONE?
THIS SCAR IS STARTING TO SHRINK, BUT IT HURTS WHEN IT'S ABOUT TO RAIN

LAPIS.

THERE'S STILL NO PLACE FOR ME IN YOUR HEART, LAPIS.
BUT YOU'VE HAD A HOLD ON MINE EVER SINCE THAT DAY IN THE CAVE.
HEY! UM... I'VE, UH, GOT TO GET BACK TO CAMP. I'VE GOT A BIG DAY TOMORROW, GOING TO THE VILLAGE AND ALL. GOT TO GET UP EARLY.

C'MON, SHARY, WE'VE GOT A JOB TO DO, REMEMBER?
I WAS JUST LOOKING!
ZZ

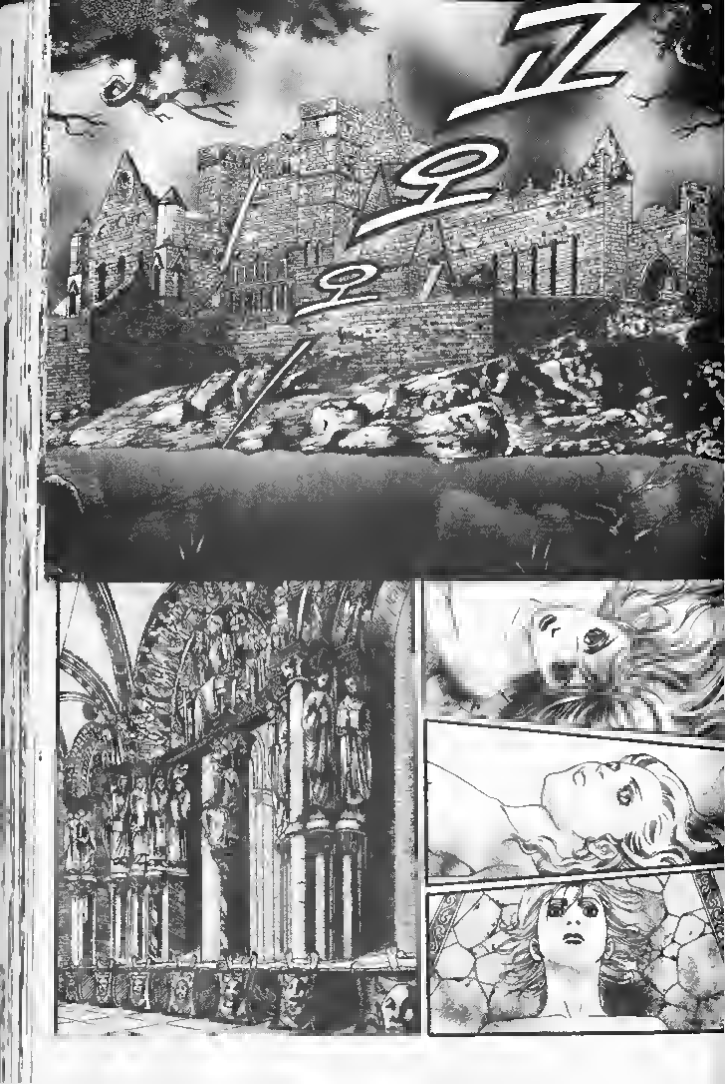
WAIT WHILE I SEE IF THEY'VE GOT ANY OF SILICA'S MEDICINE.
OKAY. JUST HURRY UP!
WOW! I'VE NEVER HEARD MUSIC LIKE THIS

WHERE ARE ALL THOSE KIDS GOING? IS IT A CARNIVAL?
I FEEL SO STRANGE...
SORRY, SHARY, I THINK THAT CLERK JUST WANTED AN ARGUMENT... SHARY?

EXCUSE ME, MA'AM, DID YOU SEE WHICH WAY THAT LITTLE GIRL WENT? SHE WAS HERE A MINUTE AGO!
SORRY SONNY, BUT I'VE GONE A BIT DEAF SAY IT AGAIN, AND SPEAK UP!
DID YOU SEE A GIRL? WHICH WAY DID SHE GO?
I'M NOT BLIND! OF COURSE I SAW HER!
SHE'S PROBABLY WITH ALL THE OTHERS GONE TO EMERALD CASTLE KIDS THESE DAYS, TRAIPSING OFF FOR JUST ANY SPELL..

EVERY NOW AND AGAIN, THERE'S A STRANGE SOUND IN THE MORNING BREEZE
EVERY TIME IT PLAYS, THE KIDS DROP WHATEVER MISCHIEF THEY'RE MAKING AND MARCH STRAIGHT THROUGH TH CASTLE GATES.
THE ONES WHO GET THERE NEVER COME BACK SERVES 'EM RIGHT IF YOU ASK ME. THE WAY THEY TIE BOTTLES TO CATS, PLAY BALL WHEREVER THEY PLEASE, PESTER OLD LADIES
I TRIED TO TELL THE GUARD, OF COURSE. OVER AND OVER, I TRIED. BUT THEY CAN'T HEAR THE MUSIC, AND THEY JUST LAUGH!
WHO'D BELIEVE A FOOLISH OLD WOMAN ANYWAYS? THEY'D RATHER BLAME IT ON THE BANDITS

SHARY!!!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POOR KID.

IS MY MEAL READY, SHELL?
YES, M LADY.

...HTFUL
SIGH OF
WRINKLES! SIGH
EVEN THE BLOOD OF THESE INNOCENTS DOES NOT KEEP FATHER TIME AWAY

THIS ONE'S BLOOD WORKED SO WELL!
RIGHT, SHELL? DON'T I LOOK BEAUTIFUL?
YOU ALWAYS LOOK BEAUTIFU EVEN YOUR WRINKLES AR BEAUTIFUL
DON'T B SILLY! COME HERE.

OHH!
THIS IS WORKING OUT BETTER THAN I COULD HAVE PLANNED. I THINK ONE OF THOSE WORMS WILL HOOK A MUCH BIGGER FISH.
OOOH!
AAAH!
THE GIRL?
WELL, I GET SO FRUSTRATED WHEN I TRY TO SEE MY OWN FUTURE. EVERYONE ELSE'S FATE IS AN OPEN BOOK TO ME...
...BUT I SUPPOSE KNOWING TAKES ALL THE FUN OUT OF IT.

EXCUSE ME. THIS WILL ONLY TAKE A MOMENT.
THIS GAME IS GOING TO BE SO MUCH FUN! I CAN HARDLY WAIT FOR IT TO START!
YOU'LL SEE.
TAKE THI
TO LORD
DIAMOND
HE'LL BE
THE LARGE
SHIP

THAT CRAZY OLD BIDDY SAID THE EMERALD CASTLE WAS THIS WAY.
HOLD ON SHARY! I'M ALMOST THERE!

PANTHER, WHAT REALLY HAPPENED TO LAPIS? HE'S BEEN CHANGED BY MORE THAN THE YEARS.
I KNOW ABOUT HIS RESPONSIBILITIES. BUT BEFORE, IT SEEMED LIKE HE WAS ALWAYS HOLDING BACK A SMILE. NOW ALL I SEE IS A SCOWL, WITH NOTHING BEHIND IT.
WHAT HAPPENED T THE LAPIS I KNEW? WHER HE GO? WHEN HE COMING BACK?
IT'S NOT THAT I QUESTION YOUR LOYALTY, CARNELIAN, BUT I MUST ASK YOU THIS--DO YOU SWEAR NOT TO WAVER IN YOUR SERVICE TO MY MASTER?

PENNY FOR YOUR THOUGHTS, CUTIE PIE?
SO THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED, LAPIS
THAT'S WHY YOU...
WHAT?! WHAT'S THAT LOOK FOR? WHAT'D I DO NOW?
I COULD NEVER CHEAT YOU OUT OF A PENNY

CARNELIAN, WHEN YOU LOOK AT ME, WHAT DO YOU SEE?
I SEE A POWERFUL LEADER, AN ABLE WARRIOR AND SOMEONE I OWE MY LIFE TO
BESIDES THAT...
DON'T YOU SEE ME AS... A WOMAN? A WOMAN WHO LOVES YOU?
I WANT YOU TO LOVE ME SO BADLY AND YOU'RE SO... SO COLD

NOT LIKE I DO.
I GUESS I'LL HAVE TO WAIT—
FOR YOU TO FIGURE IT OUT
I CAN'T HELP IT. I LOVE YOU. AND I'M NOT GOING TO GIVE UP ON THAT OR ON YOU.
IT'S BECAUSE OF HIM! ISN'T IT? WELL, LAPIS DOESN'T LOVE YOU! AND HE NEVER WILL!

AH
OH
WHY DO YOU LET THAT WOMAN GET TO YOU? YOU DON'T NEED HER ANYMORE!
WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO? KILL HER?
IF SHE'S A GROWING THREAT, MAYBE IT'S BETTER TO NIP HER IN THE BUD

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COUNSEL, KENNETH. BUT TELL ME ONE THING -- IF YOU THREE ARE MY DESTINED GUARDIANS, SENT TO ME BY THE CREATOR...
...WHERE WERE YOU WHEN I NEEDED YOU MOST? IVORY SAVED ME FROM THOSE DEMONS, THAT HELL.
I HATE HER BUT I CAN'T FORGET WHAT SHE'S DONE FOR ME. FOR US.

SOMETIMES I WONDER IF HE REALLY IS MADE OF ICE.
BUT DIAMOND, THIS IS A FACET OF YOUR PERSONALITY I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
KIAAAH!

SO, THE RUMORS AR TRUE NEA TRICK
I AM ESMERAUD I AM THE RULER OF ISLE MINE
AND I APOLOGIZE IF MY MESSENGER FRIGHTENED YOU

MANY YEARS AGO, I FORESAW YOUR DESTINY. YOU WILL BE THE RULER OF THIS WORLD!
HOW NOVEL. SHE COULD HAVE SENT A NOTE...
I PRAY THAT YOU WILL ALLOW ME TO SERVE YOU
OF COURSE, I'D LIKE TO PRESENT MY ISLE MINE TO YOU,
AS A TOKEN OF MY ALLEGIANCE.
I'VE ALSO PREPARED ANOTHER LITTLE GIFT FOR YOU
SOMETHING I'M SURE YOU'LL LIKE

SO, YOU WISH TO SURRENDER?
I'D PHRASE IT MORE DIPLOMATICALLY
YIELD YOUR MINE AND EVERYTHING IN IT, AND I'LL LIKELY LET YOU LIVE
...YES, THAT'S WHAT I'M PROPOSING.
VERY WELL.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR MER LORD DIAMON LOOK FORWARD SERVING YOU, ALL WAYS, I ALL THINGS
MY GUARD WILL WAIT FOR YOU IN THE HARBOR

LORD DIAMOND! IT HAS TO BE A TRAP! THIS WITCH STINKS OF TREACHERY!
OF COURSE IT'S A TRAP. SHE HASN'T SURVIVED THIS LONG WITHOUT LEARNING HOW TO USE HER ENEMIES' STRENGTHS AGAINST THEM
WE'LL ACCEPT HER OFFER, AND WHEN SHE STRIKES, WE'LL BEHEAD THE SERPENT IN HER OWN LAIR.

THE BRIDGE IS DOWN! ARE THEY EXPECTING COMPANY? I DON'T HAVE AN INVITATION...
HE SENSES THE DANGER, BUT HIS LOVE FOR HIS FRIENDS IS STRONG.
AND THAT WILL BE HIS UNDOING. THAT THE BAIT YOU'LL STRIKE, ISN'T IT, LITTLE FISH?

THIS CAN'T BE RIGHT. SHOULDN'T THERE BE A GUARD?

Ngyaaaaa!
IS THAT IT? NOT MUCH OF A GUARD..

Gyarrrrrr!

EH
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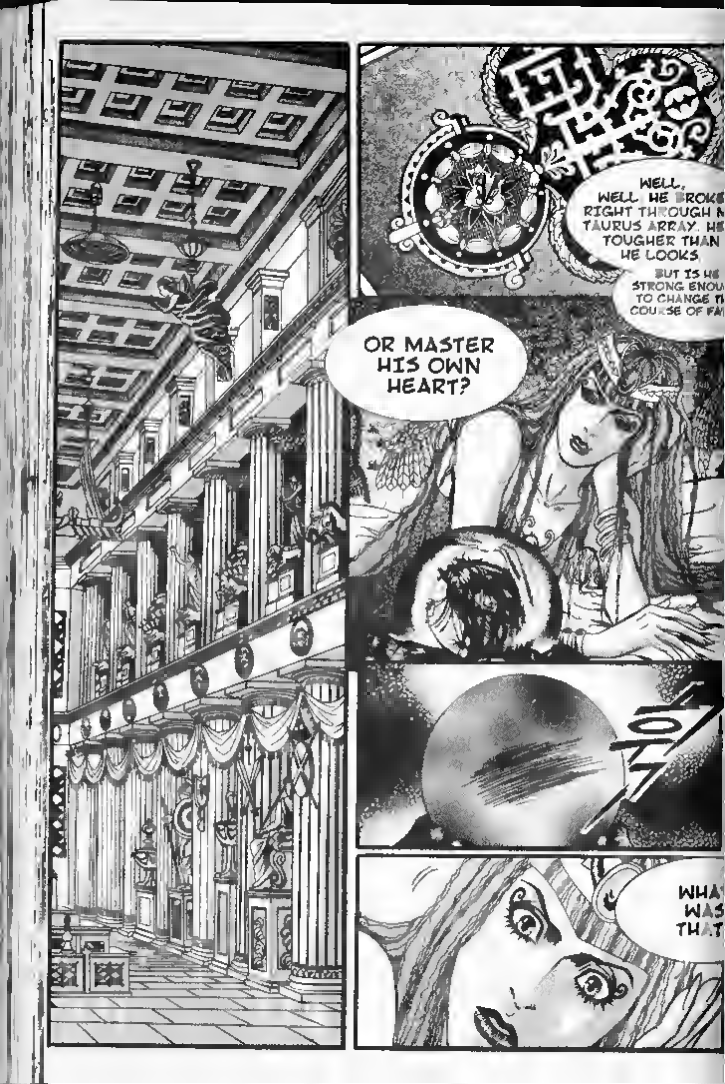
WELL,
WELL HE BROKE
RIGHT THROUGH
TAURUS ARRAY. HE
TOUGHER THAN
HE LOOKS.
BUT IS HE
STRONG ENOU
TO CHANGE T
COURSE OF FA
OR MASTER
HIS OWN
HEART?
WHA
WAS
THAT

Shell

With a beautiful spirit
masking a deep wound,
He may be weak,
but he has the power,
To shelter those in need,
As an oyster embraces
a pearl